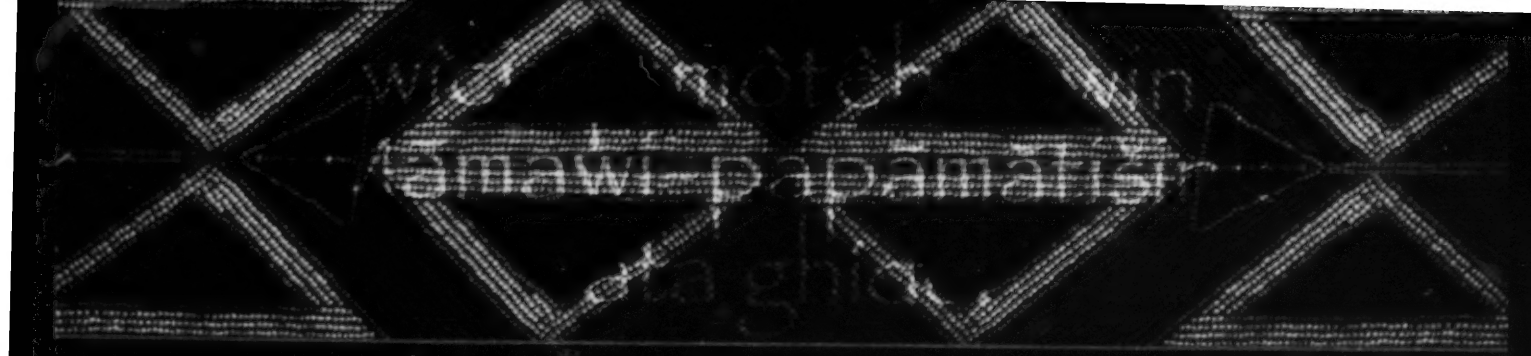

We are on a Shared Journey

...working to ensure a brighter future for us all.

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations Introduces Newsletter

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations (FNMR) was announced as a new Department on October 1, 2004. The Department provides the Government of Saskatchewan with a more focused approach to its work involving First Nations and Métis people. FNMR works with Aboriginal people to ensure their issues are understood and to provide leadership in the Provincial Government ensuring these interests are reflected in the development, coordination and implementation of government policies and programs.

This newsletter highlights some of the initiatives that have been underway during the past year, and outlines how some of the challenges are being addressed. *Shared Journey* also celebrates the hard work, the partnerships and the successes.

Shared Journey will be published periodically to keep you informed about on-going initiatives and up-coming events. To all of you, we say "Êkosi."

In This Issue

- Throne Speech Highlights
- Richard Gladue
- Aboriginal Economic Initiatives
- Meeting with FSIN
- Driving the Economy
- Leading the Way
- Consultation Guidelines
- Métis Electoral Process
- Honouring the Treaty Relationship
- National Economic Symposium

Throne Speech Highlights

The October 2006 Speech from the Throne, which opened the fall sitting of the Legislative Assembly began with recognition of the traditionally crafted beaded Mace runner and beaver pelt cushion that are now in the Legislative Assembly to symbolize the blending of First Nations and Parliamentary traditions.

The Throne Speech outlined four cornerstones which will set the foundation for:

- Making Saskatchewan the best place for young people to live, work and build strong futures;
- Strengthening Saskatchewan's leadership in public health care while reducing wait times and improving access to services;
- Advancing Saskatchewan as a leader in environmental protection and the Green Economy; and
- Ensuring Saskatchewan families benefit from the province's strong, prosperous economy.

Other highlights of the Speech include:

- Increased partnerships with First Nations and Métis to enhance education and skill training for Aboriginal youth.
- Expansion of the Aboriginal health workforce.
- A pledge to continue work on a Children's Hospital.
- Working to achieve the targets agreed upon at the First Ministers' meeting on Aboriginal issues.

Welcome to the first edition of ***"Shared Journey."*** This newsletter is intended to highlight the efforts and promote an understanding of the activities underway at Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations.

We are working with First Nations and Métis people and other orders of government to advance common interests and to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

It is indeed a *"Shared Journey"* - "wîci-pimôtêhitowin" where we are working in partnership to ensure a brighter future for us all.

Honourable Maynard Sonntag
Minister

FSIN/Government of Saskatchewan Officials Meeting

An interesting and unique meeting of about 70 senior officials of the FSIN and the Government of Saskatchewan took place in Regina on April 13th, 2006. The Chief of Staff to former FSIN Chief Alphonse Bird, Ron Crowe, described the meeting as a new approach designed to establish a constructive working relationship, and avoid a process where the two sides get together only in times of crisis.

Both groups provided an orientation on their structure and how decisions are made. The FSIN also provided informative sessions on the history of the FSIN role and importance of the Treaties. Afternoon group discussions were held on social, economic and resource management as well as policy and relationship issues. All participants found the meeting to be very beneficial and hope there will be similar meetings in the future.

Welcome Newly-Elected Executive

We welcome newly-elected Chief Lawrence Joseph, along with his Vice-Chiefs - Morley Watson, Guy Lonechild, Glen Pratt and Lyle Whitefish. They bring many years of combined experience, dedication and integrity to their roles. Their people have shown them a great honour and we congratulate them.

We thank former Chief Alphonse Bird and former Vice-Chief Delbert Wapass for their work on behalf of the First Nations People of Saskatchewan.

Richard Gladue

On January 3, 2006 Richard Gladue joined Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations as Assistant Deputy Minister.

Prior to joining the Department, Richard was the Tribal Chief of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council for ten years, and Chief of his own reserve the Flying Dust First Nation for ten years. He has also worked as a Band Administrator and a Band Management Officer for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

Among his many duties, Richard has been busy co-chairing the Provincial Aboriginal Representative Workforce Council and the National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development. He also formed the Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee on Aboriginal Issues and serves as Chair.

Richard has spoken about issues related to First Nations and Métis people at conferences across Saskatchewan. He recently met with groups inside and outside of the province to gain insight and perspective on how other Aboriginal groups are promoting economic growth. The Department has benefitted from having a person with Richard's hands-on knowledge and experience on the team and he has lent his insights not only to FNMR, but to the Government as a whole.

Aboriginal Economic Development Initiatives

Saskatchewan
First Nations and Métis
Economic Development Program

Earlier this year, two new targeted initiatives were introduced in Saskatchewan to bring Aboriginal people further into the economic mainstream. In February, Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations was pleased to launch the Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Economic Development Program. This is a four year program totalling $5 million.

The Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Economic Development Program was developed to assist Aboriginal entrepreneurs wanting to start a new business, or expand an existing business. This will ensure that more First Nations and Métis people are given the opportunity to participate in, and enjoy, the economic and social prosperity of this province. The full participation of all members of our society in the economic mainstream is imperative to Saskatchewan's continued success.

This program is administered by Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations with assistance from the Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation (SIEF) and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund (CCDF). These two Aboriginal lending institutions are also often directly involved in financing the same projects along with the provincial grant component. As of November 1, 2006 a total of $883,250.00 in grants has been disbursed in support of 39 approved applications. Of the 39 approved applications, 10 of the businesses are located on-reserve.

To find out more about this program visit our website at www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca

First Nations and Métis Fund

The second major Aboriginal economic initiative launched in Saskatchewan this year, was the Crown Investments Corporation's First Nations and Métis Fund, which makes investments in Saskatchewan-based First Nations and Métis businesses. The Fund is designed to strengthen Aboriginal participation in Saskatchewan's economy and to help create economic development opportunities and jobs for First Nations and Métis people.

Through CIC, the Government of Saskatchewan is making up to $20 million available to the Fund from 2006 through 2009. Large scale ventures are considered with the Fund making investments of between $1 million and $3 million.

CIC is administering and operating the Fund. Westcap Mgt. Ltd. of Saskatoon is the Fund Manager and makes recommendations to CIC on potential projects.

To find out more about eligibility, types of investments or business criteria contact:
First Nations and Métis Fund at 1300, 410-22nd Street East in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan S7K 5T6.
Phone: (306) 665-0200; Fax: (306) 652-8186;
Email: fnmf@sasktel.net; or visit the web at www.cicorp.sk.ca

These two new Aboriginal economic development tools will help improve the quality of life in this province and the country as a whole. While these government programs provide the tools, it is the commitment and hard work of Aboriginal entrepreneurs that will ensure success.

"Driving the Economy" - Infrastructure Developments

In this issue, we would like to highlight some of the initiatives underway at Saskatchewan Highways and Transportation that are especially relevant to Aboriginal people and those living in northern communities. Many of these projects will improve access, support economic development and promote tourism in our Province.

- **The File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council** formed a partnership with the Town of Fort Qu'Appelle and the Province of Saskatchewan to pave the road to the new All Nations Healing Hospital. Surfacing of the road will cost approximately $800,000 commencing in the 2007 construction season, and will provide training and employment opportunities for First Nations people during construction. The All Nations Healing Hospital serves First Nations people and the entire Fort Qu'Appelle region, and is one of the first health care facilities in Canada owned and operated by First Nations governments. This partnership ensures that people will have reliable access to this very important facility.

- **The Whitecap Dakota First Nation** has joined in partnership with the Rural Municipalities of Corman Park, Dundurn and Rudy, the City of Saskatoon and the Province of Saskatchewan to upgrade the highway in the Lake Diefenbaker area and leading to the Whitecap Dakota First Nation. The Province will invest $24 million, with an additional $2.4 million from the partners. "This partnership complements our strategy to create employment, business development and tourism opportunities for Whitecap and for the entire region," says Chief Darcy Bear in a news release announcing the initiative. "We will be able to participate and contribute in the regional economy and improve the quality of life for our members." This initiative will take place in three stages over the next five years and will support the growing tourism and commercial industries valued at over $100 million which are underway in the area.

- **In Northern Saskatchewan the *Roads to Prosperity*** - Saskatchewan's Northern Economic Infrastructure Strategy which was unveiled November 23rd, 2005 by Premier Lorne Calvert, the Minister of Highways and Transportation, Eldon Lautermilch, and Vice-Chief of the Prince Albert Grand Council, Don Deranger - is well underway. Under this initiative, Saskatchewan is investing $65.5 million over five to seven years to develop key economic corridors in northern Saskatchewan, improve community access roads and develop capacity building opportunities for Northerners.

Northern projects completed or underway include:

- Upgrading of the seasonal road from Points North to Black Lake to all weather (181 km).
- Construction of an all weather road from Wollaston Lake to Highway 905 (110 km).
- Surface stabilization on sections of Highway 918 to Patuanak in 2006, 2007, and 2008.
- Clearing is underway for the La Loche to Fort McMurray Highway.

Upgrading these connections will enhance the mobility of Northerners, improve access to services like health care and education, and will upgrade key economic corridors and enhance economic development across the North. Many other initiatives are underway and new partnerships are being forged. Aboriginal groups, communities and the government are joining together to combine their resources and achieve their goals.

Saskatchewan's Northern Economic Infrastructure Strategy

Leading the Way

Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners in the Nipawin area are working together to achieve a more representative workforce for First Nations and Métis people.

On June 28, 2006, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners in the Nipawin area signed an AEDP agreement which is the first of its kind in Canada.

On June 28, 2006 seventeen partners joined in signing an Aboriginal Employment Development Program (AEDP) Partnership Agreement. This signing represents the first of its kind, not just in Saskatchewan, but in all of Canada.

The partners include the North East School Division, Red Earth Cree Nation, Eastern Region II Métis Nation, Cumberland Regional College, Nipawin Métis Local #134, Town of Nipawin, Nipawin Chamber of Commerce, Shoal Lake Cree Nation, Cumberland House Cree Nation, Northern Village of Cumberland House, Cumberland House Local #42, SaveU IGA, Davis Rexall Drugs and Pineland Co-op. They signed a Partnership Agreement with Service Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations.

Through the AEDP, the partners strive to build a representative workforce where First Nations and Métis people compete for jobs based on their skills and qualifications, and where they are represented at all occupational levels in proportion to their population numbers in the province. INAC joined as a valuable partner in this Agreement, and has joined in working together on the AEDP in Saskatchewan.

First Nations and Métis Relations Minister, Maynard Sonntag commended the partners for taking the lead in addressing the challenges. "This community driven process that includes the Aboriginal community, is an example we would like to see replicated in other communities across the province. Achieving the common vision of a representative workforce where every person has the opportunity to be a full participant in the economic and social fabric of this province is a goal we all strive for."

The Mayor of Nipawin, Glen Day added, "This program represents a formal recognition of the proportionate imbalance that exists in the workforce between the number of Aboriginal people in our community and the number in the workforce. It represents a serious attempt to address the issue and provide opportunities to make real, positive changes."

This is the 72nd partnership agreement for the Aboriginal Employment Development Program. Partnerships have been signed with large public and private sector employers, organized labour, government departments, First Nations and Métis organizations, post-secondary institutions, and health care organizations.

These Nipawin area partners have now joined this committed group. They have chosen to come together as leaders in working to achieve a more representative workforce. Collaborating in this joint effort is not only a matter of fairness; but in the future will become a source of competitive advantage and sustainable development. We congratulate the Nipawin community and hope this partnership signing will serve as a model for other communities to follow.

Guidelines for Consultation with First Nations and Métis People

In July, the *Government of Saskatchewan Guidelines for Consultation with First Nations and Metis People: A Guide for Decision Makers* was released. These Guidelines assist Government employees in understanding and implementing the duty to consult with First Nations and Métis people when Government actions may impact Treaty and/or Aboriginal rights.

The objectives of the Guidelines are: 1) respect for Treaty and Aboriginal rights; 2) reconciliation and relationship building with First Nations and Métis people; and 3) commercial certainty, predictability and timeliness of decisions.

The Guidelines are just a starting point, not an end result of the consultation that is needed to build strong relationships between First Nations and Métis peoples and the Provincial Government. There are many examples where departments work very closely with First Nations and Métis groups on policy and program development and delivery. Implementing the duty to consult in good faith by all parties can be an effective stepping stone for further co-operative work in achieving mutual goals, such as economic development. To view the *Guidelines for Consultation* visit our website at: www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca.

Supporting the Métis Electoral Process

In June, three members were appointed to an Independent Oversight Committee that will work to help ensure that the next Métis Nation - Saskatchewan election is fair, accountable and responsive to the needs of all Métis citizens. The joint announcement was made by the Governments of Saskatchewan and Canada.

The three committee members are Rita Bouvier, Ron Lamabe, and Marilyn Poitras who are all highly-regarded members of the Métis community.

Ms. Bouvier is an author and educator; Mr. Lamabe is a retired RCMP officer; and Ms. Poitras is a well-respected lawyer and professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

The committee will work alongside David Hamilton, who will be assisting in his role as Chief Electoral Officer. Mr. Hamilton brings more than 30 years of experience and dedication in support of human and community development through parliamentary and democratic processes.

Front Row: Rita Bouvier (Oversight Committee Member); Marilyn Poitras (Oversight Committee Member); Rod Bruinooge, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and Federal Interlocutor for Metis and Non-Status Indians; Audrey Poitras (MNC Vice-President); David Hamilton (Chief Electoral Officer) Back Row: Ronald Lamabe (Oversight Committee Member); Honourable Maynard Sonntag, Minister of FNMR.

Honouring the Treaty Relationship

March 29, 2006 was a momentous day in the Provincial Legislature. The 100th anniversary of the first sitting of the Saskatchewan Legislature began with a ceremony honouring the role of First Nations people and the Treaty relationship. Although many years have passed since the signing of the first Treaties, time does not diminish their importance - and this was recognized in a ceremony filled with pageantry, history, culture and respect.

A traditionally crafted beaded moose hide Mace runner, and pelt cushion, was presented to the Legislative Assembly by former FSIN Chief Alphonse Bird and artist Florence Highway. Florence is a member of the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation in Northern Saskatchewan. Her beaded artwork is entitled, "Treaties Forever."

As the drums echoed through the Legislative Building the sacred ceremony proved to be a very moving experience. This historic day will long be remembered.

The Minister of Northern Affairs, Joan Beatty, first identified that something was needed in the Assembly that would reflect First Nations culture and history.

These symbolic pieces are a reminder of the many contributions First Nations people have made to the shared history of this province.

Gwenn Ronyk, Clerk of the Legislative Assembly and Tribal Chief Helen Ben of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council acted as MCs for the historic ceremony.

The Assembly was honoured with the presence of Veterans, Elders, and Chiefs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development

A National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development will be held January 23-25, 2007 at TCU Place in Saskatoon. An objective of the Symposium is to stimulate greater economic activity and labour market participation in all areas of Canada and all sectors of the economy. Its theme is Excellence in Action: Best Practices in First Nations, Métis and Inuit Economic Development.

At the First Ministers' Meeting on Aboriginal issues held in Kelowna, Premier Calvert offered to host the National Symposium on Aboriginal Economic Development with First Nations, Métis and Inuit people, governments, the private sector, academics, labour and other relevant partners.

The Province of Saskatchewan, the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, and the Clarence Campeau Development Fund, a Métis-controlled financial institution, are hosting the gathering. Through consultation with other jurisdictions and Aboriginal organizations, the planning group will ensure a sound cross section of First Nations, Métis and Inuit projects are presented, in addition to a solid corporate presence.

To learn more about the Symposium you can visit the website at www.excellenceinaction2007.ca.

Deputy Minister Departing

In December, I will be leaving the Department of First Nations and Métis Relations, and the Saskatchewan Government, and moving to Toronto to serve as the General Secretary of the United Church of Canada

It has been great to be part of the committed team at FNMR, and I'll be sorry to say good-bye to them and to First Nations and Métis who I have come to know across the province. I feel honoured to have served in this role in the Government of Saskatchewan, and I hope I will continue to hear from friends and colleagues here after I get to Toronto.

I am both excited and humbled by the opportunity to provide leadership in the United Church at the national level. Although I will be working from a different perspective, I will continue to be involved in many of the same issues related to justice and equality in Canada. The experiences I have had in Saskatchewan will continue to guide me as I begin this new work.

Nora Sanders
Deputy Minister

For additional copies or to be added to our mailing list contact:

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations
Phone: (306) 787-7177
Fax: (306) 787-5832
or visit our website at www.fnmr.gov.sk.ca

Saskatchewan First Nations and Métis Relations